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PENNSYLVANIA BULLETIN: PA360-8-2

January 14, 2008

SUBJECT: PER– Completing Performance Plans for Fiscal Year 2008

Purpose: To provide supplemental guidance for the development of performance plans for FY2008 for GS employees (see National Bulletin 360-7-35 for original guidance), and to provide information regarding performance standards/measures for a Supervisory District Conservationist, District Conservationist and Soil Conservationist.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2008

Action Due by January 30, 2008

Background: The NRCS implemented a five-level performance management rating system for employees at the GS-15 level and below. All employees are expected to have a plan in place except for employees serving in intermittent tours of duty such as WAEs and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEPS) that are working intermittent schedules and employees expected to be employed for less than 90 days.

This bulletin contains highlights of the performance planning policy and guidance for development performance plans that will align individual performance with organizational goals contained in the agency's strategic and business plans. All supervisors should ensure that plans meet SMART (Specific, Measurable, Realistic, and Time-bound) criteria.

Performance Plans

Employee's performance plans must reflect the alignment of the individual performance with organization goals. All plans must include alignment with USDA Strategic Goal 6 – "Protect and Enhance the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment" and also with at least one NRCS Mission Goal and/or Management Initiative (see attached). The NRCS Strategic Plan can be found at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/strategicplan/> (or under the Management tab on the MyNRCS website).

Focus must be placed on accomplishments (that is, outcomes and end results) rather than on activities. The parts of a performance plan are: elements, standards, alignment and objectives.

Available for your use are performance standards/measures for SDCs, DCs, and SCs. It is important that alignment is specifically addressed. Samples are attached and will also be posted on our website under Performance Management at: <http://pa.nrcs.usda.gov>



Selecting Performance Elements

To develop a performance plan, first determine the elements that are applicable in performing a given position and then determine if the elements are critical to accomplishment of NRCS mission, goals and objectives. If the answer is yes, then the element must be identified as critical.

NOTE: Every employee must have a critical element for Mission Results.

Supervisors must have a critical element for Supervision

Supervisors must have a critical element for EO/CR

All Non-Supervisors must have a critical element for EO/CR or have a performance Standard related to EO/CR included in one of their other critical elements.

Each plan must include 3-7 performance elements and must contain at least one critical and one non-critical element.

For each element identified, the information for that element should contain the following components:

- **Alignment** – Employee performance plans must align with and support organization goals. Performance plan should align with the organizational goals and targets that are established in the organization's annual performance plan. Alignment should be clear and transparent so that employees can see how their performance plan supports organizational goal achievement. Ideally, a person should be able to link the responsibility for these goals and objectives through the Performance Plans of the chain of authority (i.e., to supervisors).
- **Performance Objectives** – Employee performance plans must include performance objectives. Performance objectives describe the results or outcomes that the employee is expected to accomplish by the end of the performance period. Each element should contain no more than 5-7 objectives. Objectives must meet the "SMART" criteria.
- **Performance Standards** – Employees should be rated against performance objectives and standards/measure (or performance expectations) that include credible measures of performance. A results-oriented appraisal program ensures that credible measures are included in all performance plans. General measures of performance include quality, quantity, timeliness and/or cost effectiveness.

NRCS Strategic Goals, the USDA and NRCS Management Initiative list, example performance plans for a Supervisory District Conservationist, District Conservationist and Soil Conservationist are attached. Please contact Lisa Bonafede, Human Resources Manager (717) 237-2229, if you need further guidance.

/s/ William Bowers, Acting

CRAIG R. DERICKSON
State Conservationist
Attachments